

D#20 COMPLETE STREETS

SUPPLEMENTAL STAFF REPORT

SUMMARY: This Supplemental Staff Report provides responses to issues that were raised at a Planning Commission meeting regarding amendments to the Renton Municipal Code Development Regulations (Title IV). It also includes additional information that staff has identified as being necessary to include in the analysis for amendments.

General Description

This docket item focuses on updating current street standards in a number of areas as well as the adoption of a complete streets model. The Planning Division made this docket item request based on Highlands Task Force recommendations and in consideration of needed updates to current standards. Staff is working with an interdepartmental group (Utilities, Transportation, Fire and Emergency Services, Development Services, Community Services) in the review of, and update of minimum design street standards. Historically, development within street rights of way has been inconsistent, as requirements for sidewalks, planting strips, street trees, lighting and other components that create complete streets have been deficient or nonexistent. Below is a summary of proposed changes:

- Adopt Complete Streets policy that:
 - Reflects motorized and non-motorized transportation policies and is reflected in Title IV,
 - Ensures that the entire street right of way is routinely designed and operated to enable safe access for all users (pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities), and
 - Provides for high quality development of elements within street rights of way.
- Update Title IV street standards to provide a clearer understanding of requirements and related policies.
- Amend Title IV with a new format of minimum development standards for each street classification and those elements within the streetscape that should be included.
- Require bicycle lanes, shared lanes between bikes and motorists, or signage for safe bicycle travel.
- Allow narrower street widths for residential access streets that meet emergency services needs, with options for on-street vehicle parking on one side of a street and a no parking option.
- Amend Title IV to allow three residential properties access from a pipestem lot's private access easement, changed from the current allowance of access up to two homes. The added third residence would be the residence along the street frontage. The street frontage home would have to maintain the home's front (pedestrian entrance, front porch) facing the street, but access from private drive.
- Amend Title IV single family residential maximum driveway (curb cut) width from 20 feet to 9 feet.

Planning Commission Issue: *Concepts and guiding policies were presented at the first briefing to the Commission on June 10, 2009. Following that briefing, draft policy and draft standards have been created through the interdepartmental working group as the process has moved forward and the different departments have participated in forming new development standards to move initial concepts and objectives into an updated streets standards code. The interdepartmental group has not concluded its work yet but has created an initial draft of the streets design standards and related streetscape images.*

Additionally, the Commission asked for clarification on a few other elements related to the proposal:

- For the creation of new pipestem lots with an already developed street frontage lot, would the street frontage lot have to change its vehicle access point to be taken from the pipestem driveway?*
- Are rolled curbs allowed in the city versus vertical curbs?*
- Who maintains vegetation and trees within a planting strip area in the right-of-way (generally an area between the roadway and a sidewalk)?*

Staff Response: The following information provides recommended policy and additional information for Commission questions. To reflect complete streets policy within the code, a code subsection specific to complete streets is provided below. Staff is also providing an attachments of the draft table to date of minimum standards for the different street classifications.

Policy recommendations:

Staff recommends that a new goal be added to the Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element in reference to complete streets that compliments many of the policies already supporting this concept. This new goal is to read, “Develop a connected network of complete streets where public streets are planned, designed, constructed, and maintained for safe and convenient travel of users – pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities and motor vehicle drivers – with high quality amenities.” Many policies within the Comprehensive Plan already support this proposed goal, whether they are policies from the *Streets, Sidewalks, and Streetscape Section* in the Community Design Element, the *Non-Motorized Transportation Section* in the Transportation Element, or another section. Attachment A is a list of policies supporting the complete streets transportation goal.

Complete Streets Code:

1. Complete Streets: The City of Renton will plan for, design, and construct transportation projects to appropriately provide accommodations for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities, and freight and motor vehicles, including the incorporation of such facilities into transportation plans and programs.

2. Exceptions: Pedestrian and bicycle facilities are not required to be established when it is concluded that application of complete streets principles is unnecessary or inappropriate:

- a. Where their establishment would be contrary to public safety;
- b. When the cost would be excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use;
- c. Where there is no identified long-term need;
- d. Where the establishment would violate Comprehensive Plan policies; or
- e. Where the Director grants a documented exception which may only be authorized in specific situations where conditions warrant. Such site-specific exceptions shall not constitute general changes to the minimum street standards established in this chapter RMC 4-6-060.

Draft street standards: See Attachment B.

Additional information for Commission:

For the creation of new pipestem lots with an already developed street frontage lot, would the street frontage lot have to change its access point to be taken from the pipestem access?

The answer depends on whether the already developed street frontage lot is part of a new plat or not. If the street frontage home is not part of a plat with pipestem lots to be developed, then there would not be a connection to require that vehicular access be changed and taken from the pipestem lot driveway rather than continue to be taken from the street. But in the instance where an already developed street frontage home is included in a new plat and a pipestem lot or lots will be created behind the home, the point of vehicular access can be required to change as part given the current proposal.

Are rolled curbs allowed in the city versus vertical curbs?

Rolled curbs are not allowed in new developments. Vertical curbs are the standard within the City whether for residential or non-residential development. In cases where rolled curbs exist within the City, these areas were likely developed under county standards prior to annexing to the City.

Who maintains vegetation and trees within a planting strip area in the right-of-way (generally an area between the roadway and a sidewalk)?

Within residential areas and residential access streets, adjacent property owners are responsible for the maintenance of vegetation and street trees within the planting strip area in a street right-of-way. Within commercial areas and along arterials in Renton, this standard varies depending on location within the city. Part of the City's Urban Forestry Plan and implementation is to provide more clarification on this maintenance process.

For the Complete Streets work, the interdepartmental team draft revisions include stating that “unless otherwise agreed upon by the City of Renton, maintenance of street trees, turf, softscape, hardscape or other landscaping within the planting strip amenity area is the responsibility of the adjacent property owner.”

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Complete street goals
- Attachment B: Streets minimum standards table